
Government of the District of Columbia



Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs

Testimony of

Linda K. Argo
Director

Capital Improvements Public Oversight Hearing

March 6, 2008

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Vincent C. Gray, Chairperson

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Marion Barry, Chairperson

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICES AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Mary Cheh, Chairperson

COMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES, PARKS, AND RECREATION

Harry Thomas Jr., Chairperson

Council Chamber
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
10:00 a.m.

Good morning, Chairman Gray and Council members Cheh, Barry and Thomas. I am Linda Argo, Director of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. I'm here today to testify on DCRA's Capital Improvement project for Fiscal Year 2007 and thus far in Fiscal Year 2008.

DCRA's mission is to protect the health, safety, economic interests, *and* quality of life of residents, businesses, and visitors in the District of Columbia – by issuing licenses and permits; conducting inspections; enforcing building, housing, and safety codes; regulating land use and development; and providing consumer education and advocacy services. Our Capital Program is directly aligned to this mission.

DCRA's capital project budget totaled \$10,195,000 in Fiscal Year 2007 and 8,750,000 in Fiscal Year 2008.

Our main focus is bringing the Comprehensive Property Management System (CPMS) online this summer. CPMS is at the center of our efforts to develop logical and cost efficient processes to allow our employees and, just as importantly, our customers to work faster *and* work smarter.

This new enterprise application will allow us to greatly improve internal tracking, performance monitoring, data integrity and customer service.

CMPS will combine and eventually replace 51 independent database and process management systems into eight (8) fully-integrated user-friendly platforms. Armed with accurate, accessible, real-time data, we are establishing measurable and meaningful matrices to meet performance

targets in our mission-critical functions – permitting, licensing, inspections and enforcement.

More importantly, the system will, for the first time, establish interfaces with other District IT systems, streamlining communication and data sharing with the Office of Tax and Revenue, Department of Health, Office of Zoning, Department of Transportation among others. The system will also improve compliance with District licensing and permitting requirements.

Phase I of the CPMS project will cost \$3.5 million, which was funded in the FY 2007 Budget. DCRA will allocate \$2.0 million annually from its IT Modernization Fund beginning in FY 2008 through FY 2010 for Phase II and beyond. Phase II includes Business Licensing and Customer Service and the Citizen Access portal – which will allow customers greater online access to DCRA information.

STATUS OF KEY PROJECTS

The **Surveyor's Office (SO) Digitization Project** was established by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) and funded by DCRA through an intra-district MOU. The project scope was to scan and make available more than 300,000 current and historic Surveyor's Office documents. We are currently in the final stages of this project. Due to minor procurement issues at OCTO, the project was delayed for several months, resulting in the need for additional funds to complete the project. OCTO has agreed to provide the additional \$20,000 to complete the \$1.9 million project.

The first phase of the **Records Management Modernization Project** is complete. Over the past 18 months, DCRA's Office of Information Systems updated our FileNet infrastructure hardware, software and programming with the latest versions. FileNet is an indexing and retrieval system DCRA uses to store and organize our files.

More than one million files, made up of more than 4.5 million images – or 8 terabytes of data – have been indexed and archived to date. The updates create space for an additional 2 million images to be uploaded to the system. The images we're scanning, recording and archiving include corporation documents, certificates of occupancy and certain basic business licenses.

DCRA has spent \$870,000 of the \$1,000,000 budgeted in FY 2008 for this project. DCRA now has the largest inventory of scanned documents among all District agencies.

The project has greatly expanded the storage capacity allowing us to inventory more scanned documents and improve the image retrieval time of these documents. The scope of the project was to provide growth and support for the existing images and to improve accessibility of these images to internal and external users. As we continue to add additional content and expand our user base, we will be requesting additional funds to meet demand and continue to expand our inventory. DCRA is requesting \$1.0 million for FY 2009 for this project to double the capacity of the system.

The **Real Property Database Project** began in FY 2005 and was absorbed in a parallel project initiated by OCTO in FY 2006. The DCRA funds for the project – more than \$1 million – were transferred to OCTO through an intra-District MOU. About \$300,000 funded a study and design for OCTO’s Property Service Management Portal (PSMP) – an application that would have been the precursor to our CPMS project but was never implemented. The remaining \$700,000 was used to design and develop the initial Property Web Services (PWS) system. This system is the basis for previously mentioned CPMS web service architecture and DCRA’s web portal applications such as the Permit Intake Validation Service (PIVS).

The **Neighborhood Revitalization Project** funds the abatement of critical life and safety issues in residential and multi-unit buildings throughout the District of Columbia. Funds are used to abate violations of the District’s housing code when property owners fail to maintain properties adequately, when properties are left vacant and deteriorating or when landlords fail to provide habitable conditions for tenants. Properties declared by the Metropolitan Police Department as “nuisance” properties, those within crime hot spots and the Mayor’s Focused Improvement Areas, and those we identify internally as “*problem properties*” are the key targets of the project.

DCRA is currently due to receive capital budget allotments of \$5 million annually through Fiscal Year 2012 to bring funding in line with historical spending levels.

In FY 2007, DCRA performed abatement services on 1235 residential housing units. Abatement services include, but are not limited to:

- Demolitions 14
- Repairs 340
- Clean and Secure 733 (includes Summary Abatements – trash, grass, weeds)

In FY 2007, DCRA spent \$1.1 million on abatement activities and in FY 2008, DCRA has spent more \$359,652 from the fund on abatement activities.

When owners fail to repay abatement and remediation costs, DCRA imposes special assessments and liens against properties. Recovered funds are directed to an associated special purpose revenue fund used to cover on going administrative costs.

As part of the **Master Lease Fleet Project**, DCRA worked in conjunction with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to identify vehicles in its fleet over 5 years old that could be replaced. DCRA and DPW identified 57 vehicles – or 60 percent of our current fleet of 94 allocated vehicles – that could be replaced.

Nine vehicles were returned and taken out of service by DPW in FY 2008 and never replaced. DCRA has obligated nearly \$1.1 million to procure 57 new vehicles, including 3 vans, 2 pick-ups for our abatement crew, and 52 passenger vehicles, most of which will be provided to our commercial and

residential inspection teams. We have been informed that these vehicles will be delivered in May.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Council on these important projects. I am prepared to answer any questions you may have.